

Pontoosuc Lake News

Volume 4, Issue 1

Winter 2003



Who to Call with Your Concerns About Pontoosuc Lake

*In Pittsfield, call your City Councilors:

Robert Tuttle (Ward 1)
448-6162

Joe Guzzo (Ward 7)
499-1673

*Call the Pittsfield Parks Dept. with your concerns about Pontoosuc Park and the weed harvesting program, 499-9343

*In Lanesborough, call Paul Boudreau, Town Administrator
442-0965

*Call your legislators:

Sen. Andrea Nuciforo, 442-6810

Rep. Shaun Kelly, 684-5133

Rep. Peter Larkin, 448-8714

*The Friends of Pontoosuc Lake Board of Directors:

Lee Hauge, 442-6691

Michele Rivers Murphy, 443-7881

Ron Tinkham, 448-8370

Carolyn Sibner, 445-4430

Bev Brown, 443-5985

Dan Miraglia, 442-3568

Michael Passardi, 448-2797

Amy Pfeufer, 442-1521

Carole Siegel, 443-5445

Weed Harvesting Highs and Lows of 2002

This past summer of weed harvesting was challenging and often a learning experience for The Friends and the City of Pittsfield. Caleb Mitchell had been appointed acting Director of Community Service in April 2002, and was already the city's full-time Conservation Agent. Caleb, with the assistance of Bob LaChance (former supervisor for the weed harvesting program), miraculously managed to get the weed harvesting program up and running. However, plagued by sometimes seemingly endless challenges such as a late start, too little staff, improper maintenance and lack of close monitoring and supervision -- at times the program was at a near stand-still. Despite Caleb's and the Friends' concerted effort, hiring obstacles (drug tests, physicals and low pay) coupled with improper maintenance issues presented too large of a challenge for too small a staff. Consequently, at one time or another all three machines were sidelined because of maintenance issues or

when the machines were in working order, too little man-power was available to run all three machines. Although we were optimistic at the summer's beginning, our optimism soon turned to more corrective, data seeking measures by mid to late summer. On a high note, Bob LaChance completed the last two weeks of weed harvesting of the summer and managed to cut in lake areas that had not been previously touched. Additionally, Friends met with the Mayor and thus began the beginning stage of planning for next year. And perhaps most importantly, the visibility of Pontoosuc Lake's weed plight captured the attention of the newspaper, radio and television stations largely due to the public's clamor. We appreciate the many citizens, city councilors (especially Councilor-At-Large Matt Kerwood), and WUPE radio who avidly championed our cause and *who collectively made a difference!*

Michele Rivers-Murphy

WEED HARVESTING IN 2003 AND BEYOND

We are pleased to report that the City of Pittsfield has made a major change in the approach to weed harvesting on Pontoosuc Lake. We expect that the result will be a much more effective operation. Harvesting will be operated by the Department of Public Works, under the leadership of department head Bruce Collingwood. Full time DPW personnel

will be dedicated to the program as needed for the harvesting season so we will not have to rely on seasonal employees. Difficulties with hiring and training seasonal help were the primary reasons for the ineffectiveness of the program in the past.

(Continued on page 2)

WEED HARVESTING IN 2003 AND BEYOND (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

The City, under the leadership of Jim McGrath, the new Director of the Parks and Recreation Department, and Bruce Collingwood, Director of the DPW, undertook a study to look at options for improving effectiveness of the program. Options considered were: 1) subcontract harvesting to a private operator, possibly through a third party such as the Berkshire County Insurance Group, 2) continue to operate the program by the City, but restrict harvesting to Pontoosuc Lake, 3) operate the program by the City and continue to offer services to other lakes in the area such as Laurel Lake and Stockbridge Bowl which have been served by the program in the past. Option three was chosen, with the transfer of operations to DPW using full time city employees. The Friends of Pontoosuc is fully supportive of this decision. Providing service to other lakes will help amortize the fixed program costs and reduce the cost to Pontoosuc. With a properly manned program, service can be provided to other lakes without degrading conditions in Pontoosuc. Utilization of a private contractor would have been far more expensive.

The bad news is that this revised, more effective program will cost money; approximately \$40,000 for Pontoosuc, split equally between Pittsfield and Lanesborough. According to Jim McGrath, the City is fully committed to supporting the program at this level. In Lanesborough, all funding decisions are made by town meeting, and the Lanesborough share must be approved at the annual town meeting in May. We encourage all Lanesborough residents to support the appropriation at town meeting. (It is approximately \$9,000 over prior years' appropriations.) We also encourage Pittsfield residents to work to keep the City Council and the administration supportive of the program.

Lee Hauge

Please Help Prevent Erosion Around the Lake!

There are various dirt access points around the lake, like easements, that suffer from runoff. When the soil and grass are wet in the spring they are especially vulnerable to erosion. For our lake's sake, Please do not do anything that will hurt the shoreline vegetation, or cause dirt or other contaminants to be washed or carried into the lake. Thank you, from our lake! ☺

A New Director is Appointed to Pittsfield's Park and Recreation Department

Mayor Sara Hathaway appointed Jim McGrath as the new Director of Community Services for Parks and Recreation for the city of Pittsfield. Jim replaced Caleb Mitchell who was appointed the Acting Director of Community Services back in April 2002 and who also holds the permanent post of Conservation Agent for the city. While Caleb will maintain his full-time post as Conservation Agent, Jim officially took over the reins as the new Director in September, 2002.

Jim McGrath was formerly with the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission for four years prior to being appointed to his new post. Jim has a Bachelor's Degree in Natural Resources Management and holds a Masters Degree in Landscape Design. Friends of Pontoosuc and Jim have already met several times concerning the weed harvesting program and other related lake issues such as storm drain controls, water quality monitoring and, beach and bathhouse initiatives. Jim's two main priorities to date are the bathhouse (an up-date will be forth coming) and the "Adopt A Park Program" which is in its infancy stage. We are grateful that Pontoosuc Lake Picnic and Park area has already been adopted by a neighbor on Hancock Road. Friends appreciate the close collaboration with Jim thus far, including Jim's attending Friends' monthly meetings when possible. We look forward to mutual effort and cooperation as we work together towards our lake initiatives.

Michele Rivers-Murphy



WEED CONTROL: HARVESTING OR CHEMICALS?

The ineffectiveness of the weed harvesting program these past two years has made it tempting to give up on this approach and switch to chemical control. Chemicals are used effectively in other lakes in the region. If we cannot implement a viable harvesting program we have no other choice but to resort to chemical treatment.

There are pros and cons for both approaches. We have chosen the harvesting option because it has been cost effective due in part to the availability of the harvesting equipment provided by grant funding obtained by the County. We believe that over the long run it will improve the health of the lake by removing nutrients with the weeds. Harvesting is the control method recommended by the Pontoosuc Lake study completed by the ENSR Corporation. However costs are going up, and the program has not recently provided adequate relief from weeds.

Chemical treatment options are use of a systemic herbicide like the Sonar treatment of Onota Lake, or a contact herbicide as is used annually in Cheshire and other lakes. The systemic herbicide approach offers the hope of a long term relief from weeds but is quite

expensive (well over \$100,000 for Pontoosuc Lake) and has required follow-up spot treatment with contact herbicides in Onota lake. Sonar is not effective for multi-year control of the Curly Leaf Pond Weed, which is the dominant weed in Pontoosuc early in the season. Contact herbicides instantly kill all weeds, but the dead weeds provide nutrients for later growth, and the herbicide must be re-applied annually. The excess nutrient load may cause algae bloom problems necessitating use of still more chemicals. There is, however, some evidence that over a long time the doses needed for adequate control can be decreased. There is also concern from some about the long term safety of exposure to herbicides used for weed control.

It is not clear what is the best approach for weed control in Pontoosuc. We are planning to obtain more data on the pros and cons and costs of chemical options, comparing these to the costs and effectiveness of a well-run harvesting program. We are on the path to having a well-run harvesting program now, which should provide us with acceptable weed control in the near term, and comparison data for the long term.

Lee Hauge



Storm Water Control Project in Lanesborough

\$200K Invested in Improving Water Quality

The first of three storm water control technologies has been installed on Profile Street. The installation process encountered several challenges, including a need to drop the power lines to bring in a crane to drop the infiltration tank in place. The plans also had to be modified to include new catch basins. Another obstacle involved the discovery of some household wash water drains that were connected to the storm water system. New federal regulations make this practice illegal.

The installed system is composed of three parts: First, storm water flows through grates in the street where it drops sediment into catch basins. From there the storm water is piped to a Stormceptor © unit that separates trash and more sediment out of the water. Finally the storm water enters an infiltration tank so the water can then filter through the soil and be cleaned of nutrients and bacteria before reaching the lake.

The Profile St. project still requires some erosion control and planting of native vegetation at the outlet. Winter arrived too early to complete the project this fall. The Lanesborough DPW is doing a great job with this project and they deserve our support to help them complete the next two streets (National and Imperial). Amy Pfeufer, BRPC



New Rules on Storm-Water Runoff

New federal requirements regarding storm water have been placed on Lanesboro, Pittsfield and other communities. These communities must take federally mandated steps to stop storm water from polluting rivers, streams and lakes. The Federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requires that communities complete storm water management plans by the spring of 2003 and implement those plans by 2008 to receive their "National Pollutant Discharge Elimination Systems" (NPDES) permits.

Lanesboro's Special Town meeting of 29 Oct '02 authorized funding for Lanesboro's plan. Pittsfield is also generating a plan. These plans should help protect Pontoosuc Lake from pollutants entering the lake via storm drains.

The in-depth investigation of Pontoosuc Lake and its drainage basin (issued March, 2000) has identified 35 storm pipes entering directly into the lake that create undesirable conditions in the lake.

Legislation has been filed to allow federal grants to help communities comply with the storm water regulations.

Ron Tinkham

Weed Control Using Benthic Barriers

We have been looking into using "benthic barriers" at the Hancock Rd. park beach and possibly the "Blue Anchor" site to control the weeds and enhance the area for swimming. Benthic barriers have been used in several lakes in the area with good success at a reasonable price.

A benthic barrier is a woven cloth that prevents light from reaching the weeds and prevents growth. The material can be ordered in various sizes and needs to be weighted down by sand bags to hold them in position. The price of the material is about \$0.85 cents a square foot.

Some waterfront owners may want to use benthic barriers to control weeds around their docks and private beach areas.

Further information will be in the spring newsletter.

Gordon Zaks

Buffer Demonstration on Pontoosuc Lake

Carole Siegel lives on the western shore of Pontoosuc Lake. She is concerned with the health of the lake and is aware that non-point pollution is negatively impacting the quality of the water and the aquatic ecosystem. So she decided to sponsor a demonstration project, with the help of the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC), -- the planting of a vegetated buffer along a portion of her lakefront property. A vegetated buffer is a "living filter," because it acts like a trap for many of the pollutants that travel through it. The stems of the vegetation, a mix of shrubs, flowers and groundcover, capture and filter out debris and sediment from surface runoff. The root systems and biological activity in the soil can transform nutrients and other pollutants into less harmful forms. In essence, a vegetated buffer is a protective area between a waterbody and human activities.



This picture shows the buffer looking from the house towards the lake. Notice that the view is maintained

Carole's buffer is a very prominent landscape feature on her property, so it needed to be attractive. It was designed to be that, and more. The buffer is a mix of native shrubs, wildflowers and groundcover. Here is a summary of how Carole's buffer meets her needs:

1. *Aesthetics.* The buffer was planted with a mix of native shrubs and flowers that provide a variety of colors throughout the year. Flowers bloom during the spring (sweet pepper bush, mountain laurel, winterberry) and summer (blue flag iris). Berries mature during the summer (blueberries) and fall (winterberry, bearberry). Fall foliage is predominantly yellow and green.
2. *Maintain some lawn area* for family use. Carole's family

(Continued on the next page)



Are you (please check):
A New Member _____
Renewing for '03 _____

| | | | | | |
|-------------------|-------|---------|--------------------|-------|----------|
| INDIVIDUAL FRIEND | _____ | \$5.00 | BIG FISH | _____ | \$50.00 |
| FAMILY OF FRIENDS | _____ | \$10.00 | REALLY BIG FISH | _____ | \$75.00 |
| BEST FRIEND | _____ | \$25.00 | WORLD RECORD FISH! | _____ | \$100.00 |

NAME _____ HOME PHONE _____ WORK PHONE _____

ADDRESS _____ CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

LAKE ADDRESS _____ EMAIL _____

AREA OF INTEREST, OR EXPERTISE _____

✂✂✂ ✂ Cut off and return with your check payable to The Friends of Pontoosuc Lake, c/o Ron Tinkham, 59 Sunrise St, Rt. 44, Pittsfield, 01201 ✂✂✂

It is time to pay your dues for 2003. Many have not paid dues for 2002. We are attempting to build up our treasury balance so we can subsidize projects which will improve the lake. To the left of your mailing address it will show the year you last paid for membership. We will not remove anyone from the newsletter mailing list for not paying dues, but we encourage everyone to remain current. We are becoming a 501(c)3 chartered organization this year, so your contributions in 2003 are legally deductible.

Have You Heard About LAPA-West?

Carolyn Sibner

Lauren Gaherty, BRPC

-3rd, the annual lake meeting will be April 28th.



THE FRIENDS OF PONTOOSUC LAKE

Carolyn Sibner, Clerk
98 Oliver Ave.
Pittsfield, MA 01201
413-445-4430

Please Mark Your Calendar Now!

Our Next Annual Meeting:

Monday April 28, 2003

Please join us at 7:00 p.m. at the ITAM Lodge!

At our annual association meeting we elect officers and directors for the coming year, and discuss issues of interest to the lake. Save the date; we have reserved the ITAM lodge. More information on speakers and agenda topics will be available as the date gets closer.



We Need You!

The Friends of Pontoosuc Lake needs volunteers to help with projects and studies. If you can independently coordinate a task that's great, but any help you can offer, big or small, is appreciated.

Task

Contact Person

-Water quality monitors : Carolyn Sibner, 445-4430
Training provided.

-Storm drain improvements: Amy Pfeufer, 442-1521
Help identify & monitor storm activity.

-Beach improvements for the "Pines Park":
Michele Rivers- Murphy, 443-7881

-Grant writing for projects: Gordon Zaks, 499-4680

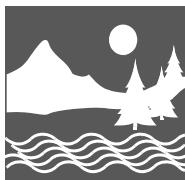
-Lake Appreciation Day, or some other such public event held at the lake: Carolyn Sibner, 445-4430

-Aid with our lake study's recommendations:

Lee Hauge, 442-6691

- Generation of a lake management plan
- Assessment of the drawdown program
- Annual clean ups of beaches and lake shore
- Street sweeping and storm drain cleaning
- Weed control projects: Benthic barriers, hand removal of weeds, etc.
- Working with legislators, city and town representatives
- Working with owners of the lake: DEM (Bob Mellace & MarkTodd)
- Coordination with other Lake Associations, esp. LAPA-West and Onota Lake
- Fund raising for projects & newsletters
- Investigate coffer dams
- Rt. 7 wall-plantings & staining to minimize eyesore

We ask that you consider offering some time to help us with any of these projects—they're all worthwhile, and we need more helpers if we are to get them done!



BE "A FRIEND" BY JOINING THE FRIENDS OF PONTOOSUC LAKE!

Are you (please check):

A New Member _____

Renewing _____

INDIVIDUAL FRIEND _____ \$5.00

BIG FISH _____ \$50.00

FAMILY OF FRIENDS _____ \$10.00

REALLY BIG FISH _____ \$75.00

BEST FRIEND _____ \$25.00

WORLD RECORD FISH! _____ \$100.00

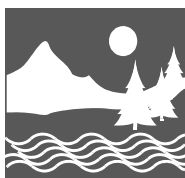
NAME _____ HOME PHONE _____ WORK PHONE _____

ADDRESS _____ CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

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AREA OF INTEREST, OR RELATED EXPERIENCE _____

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